

score political points, I believe they betray our troops as well.

It is never wrong to seek the truth, and we will find it in Abu Ghraib. But let us not make a bad situation worse with ill-chosen words and broad accusations. I reject the claim that "Saddam's torture chambers reopened under new management, U.S. management." I reject those who malign the character of our entire military. And I reject those around the world who clamor that the prison guards reform the values of America, our soldiers, or our President. They are wrong.

The real truth is that over 130,000 American fighting men and women endanger their own lives in Iraq each day. They serve far from the comfort of their families for long periods of time. The rest of the world should be down on its knees every night thanking them for it. We are.

I have a message for our troops: Ignore the blowhards in Washington. Do not listen to the national media. You are good and decent people fighting for our freedom and security. Your friends and families know this. America knows this. We are with you.

□ 1015

#### LOWER GAS PRICES NOW

(Mr. ETHERIDGE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on this administration to take action now to reduce the price of gasoline in this country. Across my district folks are suffering painfully from the skyrocketing fuel costs to record levels. Yet this administration has failed to provide relief.

Last month, OPEC cut production of crude oil by 2 million barrels, and the national average price for a gallon of gasoline has risen to more than \$2 a gallon. Yet the administration has done nothing to get OPEC to open the spigots back up.

North Carolina's economy is hurting. A truck driver approached me at church on Sunday and complained that his business is suffering because of the record high fuel prices. These gas prices will make the administration's record on job growth even worse while the big oil companies laugh all the way to the bank.

First quarter profits for Conoco-Phillips went up 44 percent. Exxon-Mobil reported a 125 percent increase. Chevron-Texaco hit a gusher with a 294 percent increase.

Mr. Speaker, I call on the White House and the administration to get to work, to get OPEC and the big oil companies to lower gas prices now.

#### BIPARTISAN PROBLEM SOLVING NEEDED

(Mr. SHAW asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I have to address the previous speaker regarding the price of energy and the shortage of energy that is claimed throughout the world. I think it is important that all of us realize that for the gentleman from Massachusetts, the candidate for President of the United States in the other party, to go and complain about fuel prices is like the kids that kill their parents and then claim that they are orphans and should be given special treatment. That is absolutely absurd.

When the Senate blocked the energy bill, it blocked the administration's plan to have an energy bill, an energy bill for this country. It is time that we stop the rhetoric, we stop the bipartisan quibbling. Republicans and Democrats are paying too much for fuel. We need an energy policy in this country, and the first step was the energy bill that stalled over in the other body. It is time for us to work together to solve problems instead of just creating them.

#### HEALTH CARE IS NOT BETTER OFF

(Mr. WAXMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the audience here today.

Are we better off now than when President Bush took office? When you look at health care it certainly does not look like it.

Since President Bush took office an additional 3.8 million Americans are uninsured, and for Americans lucky enough to have health insurance, their premiums have increased by almost 50 percent since President Bush took office. In fact, total family premiums have risen more than \$2,700 in 4 years, a rate four times as fast as workers' salaries. This is basically a tax increase on the middle class. It is hard to be healthy when you have to choose between paying rent and going to the doctor.

This is a real crisis. It has real consequence. Eighteen thousand people die prematurely each year because they do not have health insurance. And how do the administration and the Republicans running the Congress respond? With special interest proposals like tort reform, health savings account and association health plans.

These proposals will not lower health care costs. We are not better off in these last 4 years.

#### USER FRIENDLY MEDICARE DRUG CARD

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, there is no question in my mind that the avail-

ability of the Medicare prescription drug discount card this June is going to have a dramatic influence on the cost of prescription drugs in this country. For the first time, seniors are going to have an open and transparent market; and we have seen in the last 3 weeks how this has brought the price of medications down with people being able to be compared for the first time, go to a database on the Internet and compare drug prices for themselves.

1-800-Medicare, that the gentleman from Georgia pointed out, or [www.Medicare.gov](http://www.Medicare.gov) can take you through the process. I have done it myself. It is easy. It is simple. It is self-explanatory. Simplicity and efficiency are the keys to bringing the cost down in this market.

Liability reform is not a special interest reform. It affects everyone in this country. The embedded costs of liability in the medical justice system in this country and the results of defensive medicine that we all pay for cost the Medicare system \$50 billion a year.

#### BROKEN PROMISES TO STUDENTS

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, are families and college students better off than they were 4 years ago? Not when it comes to being able to afford a higher education.

In the year 2000, when candidate George Bush said we should make the path to college open for all, that was his promise. Four years later that path is covered in weeds and broken promises, and President Bush and the Republicans must accept responsibility for their failed leadership in this area.

Since 2001 a 4-year public college tuition has increased by almost 30 percent. How has President Bush responded? Each year, he broke his promise to provide a \$5,100 maximum Pell grant to all first-year college students. In fact, the Pell grant this year is worth \$500 less than it was 30 years ago, and the President's 2005 budget eliminates Pell grants from 95,000 deserving students who need that money to pursue a higher education.

Now the Republicans are rubber-stamping the President's legislation that would force the typical student borrower to pay \$5,500 more for their student loan than they currently do. I do not think those students believe they are better off than they were 4 years ago.

#### HONORING MARO K. ROGERS

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, this week, one of South Carolina's most beloved educators will retire after 41 years. Maro K. Rogers has